PIONEER EDITION

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STORY OF THE JOURNEY OF THE UTAH PIONEERS.

Heroes and Heroines, Unknown to Fame, Who Braved the Terrors of the American Desert and Founded the First Intermountain Commonwealth.

Brief and Thrilling History of the Price Paid in Toil and Tears for the Opening of the Mighty Western Domain to the Resounding March of Civilization.

THE celebration of the anniversary of the arrival of the Utah Pioneers in 1847, can never be wholly regarded as a merely secular function. The religious aspect of it is so intertwined with the history of the event that any account of the latter necessarily requires some mention of the former. It is the writer's intention to treat the topic of the jurney of the pioneers as commemorative of a state holiday merely, and not to mention the religious ideas associated with that movement any further than may be necessary for the vitality and coherence of these brief observations. Any apparent intrusions, references to religious zeal or to the peculiar faith in a divine providence manifested by the pioneers is due to the fact that these ideas assist so powerfully in explaining the motives which impelled them to their perilous journey.

ORIGIN OF THE IDEA.

It is a common mistake to suppose, as many do, that the idea of transplanting the Mormon community from Illinois and Iowa to Utah was original with Brigham Young. The fact is that Joseph Smith was the first to conceive and nurture the conviction that the distant west, and not the east, was to be the permanent abiding place of the people belonging to the Church which he had founded. His occasional references to the destined western home of his people had produced in the minds of a great many of the leading men in the Church in the days of Nauvoo the impression that Illinois was to be only a temporary gathering place, and that westward was to continue to be, as it had uniformly been before, the direction of the movement which the body of the people called Mormons must sooner or later take. This feeling, first created by the remarks of the Prophet, continued to gain strength and consistency by the course of events, till it finally seems to have become a settled conviction in the minds of the more discerning that the west was to be the true home of the people for a long period, and that these continued migrations of the Church were in some sense necessary to the wholesome life of the community. Hyrum Smith, in 1831 at Kirtland, promised Lorenzo D. Young, who was very ill at the time, that he should recover and should go with the people to the Rocky Mountains. The prediction was significant as showing what expectations were in the minds of the leading men. So Heber C. Kimball, later said of Commerce, Ill. "A very pretty place, but not a long abiding home for the Saints!" Joseph Smith himself clearly predicted the movement westward when, on Aug. 6, 1842, at Masonic hall in Montrose, he declared that his people "would continue to suffer much persecution and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains . . . .Some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities, and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains." Later Joseph took steps to plan this contemplated exodus of his people from Nauvoo to these mountains, by sending out a select company of men to "investigate the locations of California and Oregon, and hunt out a good location where we can remove to.' On the twenty-sixth of the following March, he addressed a memorial to Congress, asking for authority to raise a company of 100,000 men "to open the vast regions of the unpeopled west and south to our enlightened and enterprising yeomanry." The objective point of the route and some other matters of detail were outlined and on June 23, 1844, just four days before he was slain, Joseph Smith and others crossed the Mississippi to Montrose with the intention of starting for "the Great basin in the Rocky Mountains." But it was left to others to carry out what he had conceived.

EXODUS FROM NAUVOO.

The companies left Nauvoo in the winter under the command of Brigham Young, 400 wagons stopping to pitch tents at the first of the "Camps of Israel" upon snow and ice. They renewed the journey on the first day of March, when they traveled five miles, and rested on Sugar Creek. Permission had been obtained to cross through Iowa. The company was divided into two parts, and each of these into hundreds, fifties and tens, with captains. The prescribed outfit for a family was one wagon, three yoke of cattle, or three teams, two cows, two beef cattle, three sheep, 1,000 pounds of flour, 24 pounds of sugar, a tent and bedding, seeds, farming tools, and a rifle, the total being estimated at the value of $250. But in addition to those which were thus equipped, Col. Kane relates that there was a large number of nondescript outfits, the makeshifts of poverty; from the unsuitable heavy cart that lumbered on mysteriously, with its crazy two-wheeled trundle....pulled along by a little dry-dugged heifer, and rigged up only to drag some such weight as a baby, a sack of meal or a pack of clothes or bedding." Roads were bad most of the way and wagons were always breaking down, so that the company considered it had made remarkable progress whenever it covered 15 miles in a day. The people of Iowa used to tell that all day long the slow procession passed over their prairies—the strangest spectacle they had ever witnessed—and that they sympathized with the toil of these quiet but zealous pioneers, going they knew not whither, but with cheerful confidence in their leader as an inspired man to direct and in the God of their fathers to defend them on their journey through the unknown wilderness into which they were entering. What most impressed the Iowans was that the people did not seem to be greatly out of heart. They had, however, the habit of stopping on high hills and looking steadily back in the direction where they had last looked upon the receding vision of their far-seen temple and its glittering spire. At night singing was usual at the camp, and the plaintive melody of human voices amid the forest or on the prairie, was the unusual sound which attracted the attention of many a hunter and frontiersman who had penetrated the wilderness in search of game.

AT WINTER QUARTERS.

The main camp established itself at Winter Quarters, on the west bank of the Missouri, partly occupying some bluffs at which the Indians were wont to hold their councils, whence the later name of Council Bluffs. The houses were built of logs, a fortification was erected, a grist mill and log tabernacle put up, and schools established. This work was done, in part at least simply to keep the men at work since the place could be occupied for only a year or two at most. But the habit of work was innate with these pioneers. Col. Kane relates that "it was a comfort to notice the readiness with which they turned their hands to woodcraft. . . . . One would fell a tree, strip off its bark, cut and split up the trunk in piles of plank, scantling, shingles, make posts, pins, poles—everything wanted almost to the branches—and treat his toil, from first to last with more sportive flourish than a schoolboy whittling his shingle."

TRIALS OF THE JOURNEY.

But the winter was a hard one, and the journey just completed, had had its dark side. Sickness had been general. Deaths had been so frequent that burials had to be performed without ceremony. Sorrow and lamentation had been daily visitors. No family had escaped; few but had buried one or more. Col. Kane describes a familiar scene. One of the patients, whose emaciated features were lit by a candle flickering in the bleak air off the river, was dying of fever. "Over his head was something like a tent, made of a sheet or two, and he rested on a partially ripped old straw mattress, with a hair sofa cushion under his head for a pillow. His gaping jaw and glazing eye told how short a time he would enjoy these luxuries." The people were well-night broken down physically by this time, and the miasmatic atmosphere that rose from extended areas about them of at that time swampy forest-covered lands, brought on disease. Food was scare. The Indians had to be placated and closely watched besides.

THE MORMON BATTALION.

In 1846 the war with Mexico had broken out. The authorities at Washington had learned that the Mormons were on their way to California or Oregon, then Mexican territory, and decided to make use of these colonists in winning this great area. To aid Gen. Kearney, it was decided to call on 500 volunteers from the Mormons, then encamped at Pisgah and Council Bluffs. Capt. Allen laid the proposition before the people, who at first looked upon this call as a stroke of their enemies now to destroy them utterly. But Prest. Young showed them that the nation itself was not responsible for their expulsion from Nauvoo, and urged the enlistment of the 500 volunteers, thereafter to be known as "the Mormon Battalion." The people rose, with fine patriotism, to the occasion. Boys offered to drive the teams, that elder brothers or fathers might enlist; and the women again faced the additional impending privation with quiet heroism, and urged the men to go. To distract the minds of the people from the awful foreboding, of the new and nameless fear that now occupied the thoughts of many the evening before the departure of this battalion for the long march into Mexico was appropriated to a farewell ball. "A more merry dancing party," writes Col. Kane, "I have never seen." At its close, a song in touching melody to the words of the text, "By the river of Babylon we sat down and wept," was sung by a "young lady with a fair face and dark eyes," to a quartet accompaniment. The battalion, waving the Stars and Stripes, passed St. Joseph marching to the tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me." But their story cannot be told here.

MARCH OF THE PIONEERS.

Of the journey of the pioneers themselves, we may not now relate any of the incidents: the buffalo herds encountered, the wild animals seen, the virgin groves explored, the grassy plains, the making of the road, the perils of fording the great streams, the mountain climb, the Indian dangers, the dreary day, the lonely night. The line of graves, especially of little graves all along the route, tell enough. Nor can we speak of the handcart companies that followed, as day after day, week after week and month after month men, women, children, toiled over the plains and up and down the mountain heights. Neither can be reviewed here the days of early want and toil in the valley, after their arrival at this place. Only the outline; then let the silence fall, for the imagination cannot but supply the rest.

Brigham Young chose 154 ablebodied men at Council Bluffs to pioneer the way to the western home. They left Elkhorn, 27 miles from Bluffs, on April 15, 1847. For hundreds of miles they followed the meanderings of the Platte river, keeping mostly on the north side of the stream. They touched Fort Laramie, an old trading post, and also Red Buttes, Independence Rock, Devil's Gate, Little and Big Sandy and Fort Bridger. Finally they arrived at Echo canyon. They met certain trappers, among whom Harris and Bridger gave them very dismal pictures of the Salt Lake valley and strongly urged them to go on to the fertile lands of the coast. But their leader had decided. They would go to the Great Salt Lake. One division of the party led by Orson Pratt, passed into the valley on July 22. On July 23, President Young lying ill in the wagon of Elder Wilford Woodruff, obtained from an eminence a view of the land in which he purposed to find rest and peace for his weary people. He gazed upon the valley for a long time, and then said, "Enough. This is the place. Drive on!" They passed through Emigration canyon and came into the valley of the Great Salt Lake on July 24, 1847.

SALT LAKE VALLEY.

The valley lay gleaming beneath the rays of the noonday sun, when first the pioneers beheld it. The air was still, and the sun shone hot upon the dry and baked surface. The hills, however, were covered with sagebrush, the streams and mountain sides abounded in oakbrush, small trees were upon some of the mountains and the canyon ravines were well timbered. The lower lands had grass, rushes, and sedgas in the moist spots, and sunflowers are said to have been obsereyd in places. The silence of the primeval desert was impressive, and a feeling of utter loneliness and desolation would spring up when ever any one became separated from his companions. This was because of the oppressive stillness. The rising of heated air from the dry plains caused the atmosphere to shimmer as in case of a great fire, and the hot breath of the desert at times seemed like the blast of a furnace. No sound of bird or animal, no cool streams, no grassy meadows, no living thing but the occasional lizard and locust, except in the canyons and near the waters of the lake and the streams that flowed into it, where waterfowel were not lacking. But before the day was over, "within an hour," some have said, the pioneers had their plows going, overturning the earth for their seed wheat. With infinite labor, they brought small streams of water from near the canyons along the dry hills, for every stream had cut into a great gulley lower down. They moistened the earth where the seed was sown, or flooded the hard and baked surface where it could not otherwise be plowed. This crude system of pioneer irrigation was in itself, also, the beginning of a wonderful system of agriculture.

ALMOST DISCOURAGED.

But many were appalled by the feelings awakened in the vast solitude which met them here. The first women to arrive were overcome with disappointment and apprehension. And scarcely less bitter was the grief of some at the prospect of remaining in this desolate place than it had been over the loss of those whom they had buried on the way. Was it for this that they had endured all of the weary and heart-breaking past; instead of finding rest, it seemed at first like the renewal of the long nightmare of the plains. The too recent scenes of "Rachel mourning for her children and refusing to be comforted because they were not," revived afresh in memory. But usch moods were of brief duration. There was work to be done—the children must be fed. Work brought sweet slumber. Occupation banished foreboding. The grain grew like magic. The beauties of the new home began to be discernible. Health returned, and with it hope and buoyancy. Happiness and peace settled upon the little communities that now were laying with joyful labor the founadtions of a great American commonwealth.

"HARD TIMES."

As late as the early seventies, the writer of this, then a boy of 10 years, can still remember the most usual fare of the poor—bread and molasses for breakfast, molasses and bread for dinner, and both for supper. But nature wrought a strange miracle, causing a shrinkage of the digestive apparatus and needs of the body in proportion to the scarcity of food. Chronic hunger was indeed the common lot; yet when in Tooele, one man who had received a wagonload of provisions invited his friends to a feast at which they were bidden to eat all they wanted, they found to their disappointment that their stomachs could contain only the usual spare rations, and not half the food prepared could be eaten. Ingenuity found ways of getting along. The discovery of the sego and other edible roots added variety to the daily fare. Health was the rule, and contentment was nearly universal. They are good times to write and talk about. One song, a general favorite, has come to us from those days. When Gen. Grant passed through this city, he was tired and exhausted, but rose from his couch to speak to the multitude in front of the old Walker House and the Clift House on Main between Second and Third South, when the Parowan choir sang for the distinguished visitor their most familiar theme, "Hard times come again no more!" The general, visibly affected, assured the people that his heart's wish for them was expressed in the words of the song to which he had listened, for he knew something of the privations that had been their lot.

A detachment of the battalion came soon after the pioneers, increasing the population to about 400 souls. Another company arrived that fall, numbering about 2,000 men, women, and children, in 560 wagons, with 5,000 head of cattle. In 1848 another detachment of over 1,200 left Winter Quarters under President Young, another numbering 700 under Heber C. Kimball, and a third numbering over 500 under Willard Richards. Their arrival swelled the population of the valley to between 4,000 and 5,000 and other large companies came each year following.

The first population was not so heterogeneous as the state has since become. New England blood and traditions were strong among the leadership, and their tendencies were thoroughly in accord with those in which the western continent was first founded, and the nation had its birth.

FOR PERMANENT HOMES.

The first summer and fall in the valley saw much progress towards making permanent homes, but it is unfortunate that owing to the absence of the leaders, who returned to Winter Quarters, only a meager record has been left of it. John Smith was made president of a provisional stake, and a letter from him reporting on the winter's experiences is all that is left to tell the story in the form of first hand document. It mentions the departure to California of a band of 18 men, who were sent to the Chino ranch to buy milk cows for the people, and of their return in March, 1848, with a herd of cows. This trip has yet to be put into history as the initial trip over the southwest route, a later excursion led by Apostles Rich and Lyman having been given the credit in the general literature on the subject.

SETTLING OF DAVIS COUNTY.

In this period, too, the first step was taken to settle Davis and Weber counties. The Battalion company which arrived a few days after the pioneers, consisted of the sick and disabled of the Mormon battalion. They had been left at Pueblo, Colo., and Capt. Brown, who was in charge, soon left the valley for San Francisco, where the paymaster was located, with commissions from the members to receive their pay. From his portion, which he received in Spanish dubloons, he afterwards bought the present site of Ogden City from the Goodyear brothers, who had a Spanish grant to the land. Thus began a city to the north of Salt Lake, for Capt. Brown welcomed other settlers, which five years later, was destined to save its sister city on the south from starvation through two seasons of famine and crop failures.

In this Utah settlement there converged many lines of interest, for the Mormon movement westward had developed many other expressions of it. There was a colony under Samuel Brannan, which had established itself at Stockton, Cal., and one of the historic moments in this valley's history was when Brannan met Brigham Young and the two men threshed out the question of whether it was better for the pioneers to proceed on their way or to stop here, and settle Salt Lake valley. Brannan wanted them badly to come to California, and after hearing all of his story, Brigham Young decided in the negative.

In honoring the pioneers the younger generations do more for themselves than for those preceding them, for out of the experiences of their fathers they are able to raise standards for their own conduct, and these old pioneers did much from which valuable precedents may be gained.

They raised the Stars and Stripes everywhere over this land, then Mexican territory, and in a few years applied for admission to the Union as the state of Deseret. The simplicity and honesty of their lives, their candor, their loyalty, often misunderstood, and their unshaken devotion to the right as they understood it, are qualities upon which the impartial historian loves to dwell. Their experience had made them wary of strangers; but they received all newcomers with kindness, and saved from starvation and want the innumerable companies of gold seekers on the way to California. All found a safer refuge from border violence and Indian perils here than could be found in any other western commonwealth. Whatever else may be said or thought of them, we who enjoy of the fruit of their labors and the results of their sacrifices, may always apply to them, with perfect propriety, the words of the poet:

"Aye, call that holy ground,
Which first their brave feet trod;
They left unstained what here they found—
Freedom to wo...ip God."

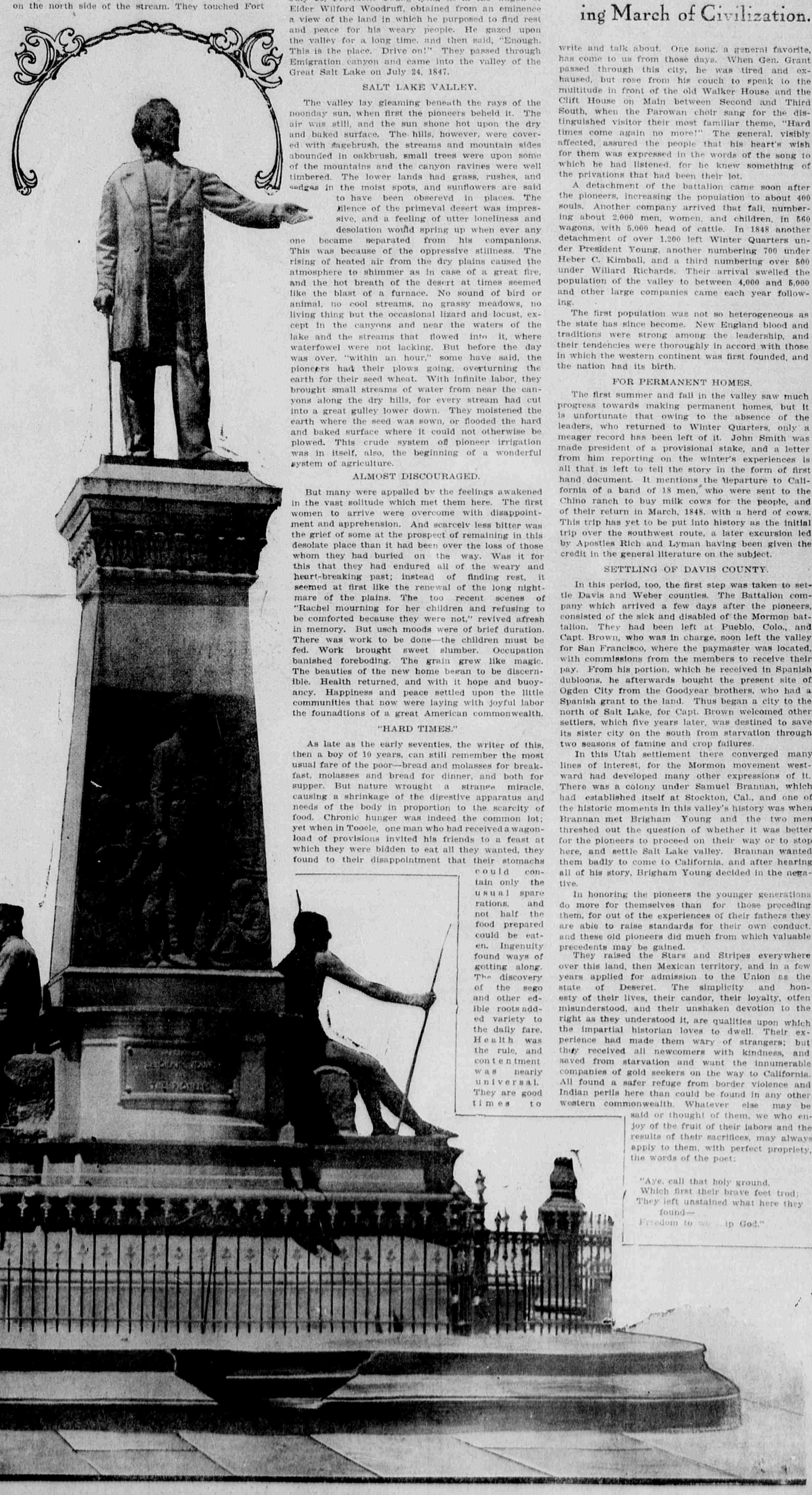

Photo by Harry Shipler.

FIRST PICTURE PRINTED OF THE MONUMENT TO THE PIONEERS SINCE THE COMPLETION OF THE BASE.